

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #2483/01 3201108  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 161108Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4219  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 6250  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 2819  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 6856  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 7067  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 6306  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 4956  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 7162  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3928  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2144  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0811  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 8332  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 3337  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7315  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9392  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2138  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3180  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002483

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR X0XX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

-----  
SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
-----

Mideast

-----  
Key stories in the media:  
-----

Over the weekend all media cited declarations by senior Palestinian officials that they might unilaterally seek support of the international community for an independent state. PM Benjamin Netanyahu's response dominated the headlines. Senior PA negotiator Saeb Erekat was quoted as saying in an interview published on

Saturday by the Palestinian Al-Ayyam newspaper that the PA was considering asking the U.N. Security Council to recognize the existence of a Palestinian state along the pre-1967 lines, with its capital in East Jerusalem. Netanyahu said yesterday at the Saban Forum in Jerusalem: "Any unilateral path will only unravel the framework of agreements between us and will only bring unilateral steps from Israel's side." There is no substitute for negotiations between Israel and the PA, Netanyahu said. "What is needed to start moving forward is to begin negotiations immediately," Netanyahu added, and "to start off with a good spirit, one might say with a generous spirit. I am talking about our side, and that is what I also told [U.S. President Barack] Obama." Israel Radio reported that the PA has dismissed Israel's response to its plan. The radio quoted senior PA official Yasser Abed Rabbo as saying that the Palestinians do not want to proclaim independence, but to determine their border as the pre-1967 one. Major media quoted FM Avigdor Lieberman as saying on Saturday that a return to the pre-1967 lines, with a Palestinian state in the West Bank, would bring the conflict into Israel's borders. The media reported that right-wing politicians propose annexing the settlement blocs to Israel. Israel Radio quoted Egyptian officials as saying that a Palestinian state can only be established when conditions are ripe.

Yesterday HaQaretz reported that last week French President Nicolas Sarkozy offered to host an international summit in Paris to break the deadlock in the Middle East peace process. Sarkozy first raised the proposal in his meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday, then with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Syrian President Bashar Assad. HaQaretz said that neither Netanyahu nor Abbas rejected the offer, though the U.S. administration's position remains unclear.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton, who also attended the Saban Forum yesterday, was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot's Nahum Barnea: "You should not think that President Obama is your enemy." Clinton was also quoted as saying that neither the geography nor the demographics had changed since the late PM Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn in 1993. Clinton expressed his belief that there would have been a comprehensive peace in the Middle East a decade ago if Rabin had not been assassinated. Clinton also expressed optimism about the conduct of the Netanyahu's government toward peace.

Leading media published a White House picture of PM Netanyahu's latest meeting with President Obama, as the two are smiling and chatting in the Oval Office private dining room. The photo is supposedly meant to dispel rumors of a harsh meeting. Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly and Assistant Secretary of State Philip Crowley for Public Affairs pushed back against Iranian efforts to cause a schism in U.S.-Israel relations and stressed the United States' commitment to continue pressing toward peace talks despite recent difficulties.

Yesterday HaQaretz reported that last week Brig. Gen. Avichai Ronski, the IDF's Chief Rabbi, told students in a pre-army yeshiva program that soldiers who "show mercy" toward the enemy in wartime will be "damned." Ronski also told the yeshiva students that religious individuals made better combat troops.

Yesterday HaQaretz quoted the British newspaper The Guardian as saying on Friday that Human Rights Watch has accused Israel of launching an "organized campaign" of lies and misinformation against it in the wake of the organization's support of the Goldstone Report.

All media reported that the Knesset is likely to grant final approval today to a controversial law that would set up a biometric database with information about every citizen of the country. The database, which Israel Radio says does not exist anywhere else in the world, would be used to issue "smart" identity cards. Opponents to the proposed law cite the real threat to Israeli welfare and the possibility that foreign agents might have access to the database.

HaQaretz reported that less than six months after two Galilee communities -- Manof and Yuvalim -- proposed changing their bylaws to make "loyalty to the Zionist vision" a condition of acceptance into the community, a third -- Mitzpeh Aviv -- has just followed

suit.

All media reported that on Saturday some 2,000 ultra-Orthodox men violently demonstrated outside the Intel Corporation's offices in Jerusalem's Har Hotzvim industrial park to protest the company's operation of its factory on the Jewish Sabbath. The protests continued on Sunday. Media reported that Sabbath work in the plant has been going on for 24 years. Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat was quoted as saying on Sunday: "I am a believer in the status quo and coexistence within the capital. Intel has been working in Jerusalem for 24 years in this current framework, and there is no change in it." Media warned of the negative consequences of a closure of the factory.

The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted PM Netanyahu as saying yesterday at the cabinet meeting that France is Israel's preferred broker for peace negotiations with Damascus as he rejected Syria's call for Turkey to hold such talks.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that yesterday California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Industry, Trade, and Labor Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer signed a renewable energy R & D cooperation agreement.

Yesterday Haaretz quoted IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi as saying last week before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the army is willing to probe claims of wrongdoing by its soldiers.

Yesterday Maariv reported that on Friday afternoon, five cars from the American Consulate-General in Jerusalem arrived at the new Gilboa (Jalame) border crossing between Israel and the northern West Bank -- a border crossing that was officially opened just last week to motor vehicle traffic with American funding to boot. Passengers in the convoy refused to identify themselves. As a result, their entry into Israel was delayed by approximately four hours. At a certain stage Defense Ministry and police officers were called in to the border crossing, but despite their repeated requests, the Americans refused to roll down their windows and claimed that that was the arrangement with them. "What can I do?" a dismayed Israeli police woman asked her superior officer, "the driver doesn't want to give his ID." The Israeli security personnel, who appeared to be unnerved by the Americans' arrogant behavior, tried to explain that they were afraid that the drivers were not diplomats but, rather, East Jerusalem Palestinian residents. Those efforts were made in vain. Ultimately, the incident ended only a number of hours later, when two security officials from the American Embassy in Tel Aviv arrived and persuaded the people in the convoy to present their passports as required. Maariv quoted a security official who was involved in the incident as saying on Saturday: "There are always provocations at the roadblocks with people from the consulate in Jerusalem. Their cars are driven by drivers from East Jerusalem who insist not to be inspected, despite the fact that they don't have diplomatic immunity. We need to make sure that the people in question are diplomats, but that can't be done through opaque black windows." The incident resulted in the closure of the border crossing for the entire day, which made many Israeli Arabs who wanted to use the crossing to visit their Palestinian relatives turn back. Maariv quoted a spokesman for the Defense Ministry as saying: "We operate in keeping with the procedures that were set by the Foreign Ministry and in keeping with the accepted rules in the world with respect to the bearers of diplomatic passports." The daily quoted an American diplomat as saying on Saturday: "There was a misunderstanding that was resolved in the end."

Maariv cited an Iranian opposition Web site as saying yesterday that retired Iranian general Alireza Asgari, who disappeared in Turkey in 2007, had been kidnapped by the Mossad, transferred to a third country, and is now detained in Israel.

Yediot reported that yesterday a group of teachers from Morocco concluded an eight-day seminar at Yad Vashem.

Israel Radio reported that President Shimon Peres is slated to meet today in Buenos Aires with Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner

-----

Mideast:

-----

#### I. QObamaQs Drama

Washington correspondent Orly Azolai wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/16): QThe worst moment would be when Obama gives up and declares that there is no more hope. He tried and failed. This would mean that the Palestinians would do one of two things: unilaterally proclaim their state in the Q67 borders and receive recognition Q however partial Q from the worldQs nations. The United States may not be the first country to do so, but it ultimately will. The PalestiniansQ second option will be a passage to the contingency plan dreamt up by many of them and a declaration that the two-state solution has failed and that they are no longer interested in it -- they will want a single state. They will to be equal citizens in one state between the Jordan River and the [Mediterranean] Sea. As far as Israel is concerned, this would be the end of the Jewish State. Those who do not see where this leads are historically and diplomatically blind. Obama is not unsighted: a man who succeeded in being elected president after half a term in the Senate and becoming the first Black president in U.S. history can be farsighted. Now is his moment of truth in the Middle East. This time Obama must produce drama.

#### II. QSave UN/SC Res. 242

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/16): Q[Saeb] Erekat and [Mahmoud] Abbas are wasting time and torpedoing a two-state solution with their intransigence.... It's clear why Erekat wants to abandon 242. The resolution's masterfully crafted language insists on an exchange of land for peace using the formula Q Qwithdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflictQ -- that deliberately does not call for a pullback from all territories. So rather than bargain in good faith to build a viable accord, Erekat and Abbas are betting on an outside imposed solution. Their way will not bring reconciliation, mutual security and peace, but doom yet another generation of Israelis and Palestinians to more bloodshed. Would it not be better if the Palestinians returned to the bargaining table and the sooner the better?

#### III. QNo State and a Half

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/16): QKadima Knesset Member Shaul Mofaz's peace plan is a refreshing change, particularly in light of his past, although no peace agreement will emerge from it.... What will Israel do if Abbas announces that by a reasonable date, say, December 31, 2010, the option of a state and a half -- Israel and alongside it a Palestinian entity -- will go the way of the West Bank's Qvillage leaguesQ of the 1980s [bodies staffed by Palestinian collaborators appointed by Israel]? The question therefore is not why Netanyahu needs Abbas and Fayyad, but why they need Netanyahu.... Abbas' decision to end his political career brings the end of the PA in Ramallah closer, along with Netanyahu's moment of decision on dividing the land. While Mofaz has not given Netanyahu the magic political formula that will bridge the gap between the Bar-Ilan speech and Abbas' resignation speech, Mofaz took away Netanyahu's political excuse by bypassing Kadima leader Tzipi Livni on the left. Netanyahu can no longer hide behind the threat that halting construction in the settlements and painful concessions will bring down his government. If Netanyahu is serious about a two-state solution, he has 32 partners at his disposal: the Kadima Knesset members and the four Labor rebels who will be glad to replace the rejectors of compromise in Likud and its partners to the right.

#### IV. QA Partner in the North

Ha'aretz editorialized (11/15): QThe recipe for an agreement is known based on the talks that six Israeli prime ministers, including Netanyahu and Barak, have conducted with Syria over the past 18 years. It involves an Israeli withdrawal from all of the Golan Heights in exchange for security arrangements and a normalization of relations. Also needed is a creative solution for the dispute over the final border. The ability of Assad and his regime to carry out any agreement is not in question. Netanyahu must respond to the

renewed opportunity that Assad is presenting to him. Instead of saying he is ready for negotiations without preconditions but without committing to anything, he must move all the way to a peace agreement that will improve Israel's strategic situation. He has a partner in Damascus.

#### IV. The Usual Syrian Round

Political commentator Shalom Yerushalmi wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/16): Four and a half months have passed [since French President Nicolas Sarkozy asked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to focus on Syria], and nothing has happened on the Syrian front. There is no reason for anything dramatic to happen today. Netanyahu will not withdraw from the Golan Heights, and the Syrians will not accept a partial withdrawal, whereas the Prime Minister cannot offer them even that. It is all or nothing. Netanyahu has committed himself thousands of times not to withdraw from the Golan, and he now again faces the test of credibility that is so important to him. The right wing will crucify him for any withdrawal, the voices of the opponents can already be heard in the government, and the left wing will also not applaud him. In brief, there is no way it will happen. However, indirect and non-committal talks could be held, even if nothing comes of them. A political process has many dividends, even if it is futile. Netanyahu can present himself as a peace lover, and receive a bit of vital sympathy around the world. Bashar Assad uses the talks to escape from the isolation and sanctions. The Americans and the Quartet leaders also show that they are achieving something. What could be wrong with that?.... Two days before the elections, Netanyahu went with his son Avner to the Golan Heights. He planted a tree near the community of Aniam, and promised Avner that his son would see the tree, which would take root in the Golan under Israeli sovereignty. So what will happen first? Will my grandchildren see our house in Damascus after full peace reigns, or will Netanyahu's grandchildren enjoy the fruit of the tree under conditions of ongoing conflict? I think the answer is clear.

CUNNINGHAM